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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 03 ZAGREB 01908

SIPDIS

JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-5PMA/J21//  
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ISP//  
NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ZAGREB 001908

SIPDIS

VIENNA ALSO FOR BOSNIA  
BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEU  
USVIENNA ALSO FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 12356: DECL: 5/10/96

TAGS:

SUBJECT: VISIT TO DETAINED SERBS YIELDS NO SOLID EVIDENCE  
OF ABUSE

REF: ZAGREB 1824

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SUMMARY  
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1. ON MAY 12, POLOFF VISITED THE GYMNASIUM BEING USED AS A  
MAKESHIFT DETENTION CENTER IN VARAZDIN WHERE OVER FIVE  
HUNDRED SERB MEN FROM SECTOR WEST HAD BEEN BROUGHT BY  
CROATIAN AUTHORITIES ON MAY 5 (AND WHICH WAS EMPTY BY MAY  
16). THE VISIT WAS PROMPTED BY ALLEGATIONS OF PHYSICAL  
MISTREATMENT AND ABUSE WHICH HAD BEEN PICKED UP BY THE UN  
AND ICRC (REFTEL). POLOFF FOUND NO HARD EVIDENCE OF  
PHYSICAL MISTREATMENT, BUT THE ATTITUDES OF THE CROATIAN  
POLICE TOWARD SUSPECTED "WAR CRIMINALS" LED POLOFF TO  
BELIEVE THAT POLICE COULD HAVE BEEN OVERZEALOUS IN THEIR  
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PURSUIT OF INFORMATION DURING INTERROGATIONS. END  
SUMMARY.

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TRIED TO PROCESS QUICKLY, BUT 139 STILL THERE AFTER 8 DAYS  
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2. THE LOCAL POLICE CHIEF TOLD POLOFF THAT, ON JUST A FEW  
HOURS NOTICE, 532 SERB MEN HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO VARAZDIN ON  
MAY 5. THE SAME DAY, ALL OF THE MEN OVER 55 AND UNDER 20  
HAD BEEN RELEASED, NINETY-THREE IN TOTAL. THE POLICE THEN  
BEGAN TRYING TO ESTABLISH THE IDENTITIES OF THE REMAINING  
439 DETAINEES THROUGH DOCUMENT CHECKS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND  
FINGERPRINTING. THESE MEN WERE THEN CHECKED AGAINST  
CROATIAN GOVERNMENT RECORDS FOR ANY EVIDENCE OF "WAR  
CRIMES."

3. FROM MAY 6 UNTIL MAY 13 (WHEN THE CENTER WAS CLOSED),  
THE LOCAL POLICE PROCESSED ALL THE REMAINING SERBS. OF THE  
439 DETAINEES, 206 WERE RELEASED DIRECTLY BACK TO PAKRAC,  
AND 219 WERE SENT FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION BY MILITARY  
INVESTIGATIVE COURTS. NINETY PERCENT OF THE LATTER WERE  
SENT TO THE MILITARY COURT IN BJELOVAR. THE REMAINING  
FOURTEEN MEN WERE TRANSFERRED TO BJELOVAR TO GIVE  
TESTIMONY AS WITNESSES AGAINST THEIR FELLOW DETAINEES. ON  
MAY 16, THE VARAZDIN AUTHORITIES SAID THEY DID NOT KNOW  
HOW MANY OF THE 233 MEN TRANSFERRED TO THE MILITARY COURTS  
HAD BEEN RELEASED AND HOW MANY WERE STILL BEING HELD.  
(NOTE: PRESS REPORTS ON MAY 16 SAID THAT 220 SERBS, OF  
ALL THOSE HELD IN BJELOVAR ORIGINALLY OR TRANSFERRED FROM  
VARAZDIN, WERE STILL BEING HELD IN THE BJELOVAR DISTRICT  
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JAIL ON SUSPICION OF WAR CRIMES. ON A PREVIOUS VISIT TO  
BJELOVAR, POLOFF WAS TOLD THE JAIL HAD A CAPACITY OF 100.  
END NOTE.)  
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LIVING CONDITIONS BEARABLE, INTERROGATIONS LENGTHY

14. IN VARAZDIN, POLOFF WAS GIVEN FREE RUN OF THE SPORTS HALL WHERE THE REMAINING 139 DETAINEES STILL THERE ON MAY 12 WERE BEING HELD. THE MEN WERE ALL LYING ON MATTRESSES ON THE MAIN GYM FLOOR. FOR TWO MEALS A DAY AND SMOKING PRIVILEGE, WEATHER PERMITTING, THE MEN WERE TAKEN EN MASSE TO AN OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND. INTERROGATIONS WERE HELD IN UPSTAIRS OFFICES. THE INTERROGATIONS WERE SAID TO TAKE ON AVERAGE ONE TO TWO HOURS PER PERSON. THEY WERE ONLY DONE DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS. POLOFF WAS SHOWN TYPED NOTES FROM ONE INTERVIEW AS A SAMPLE. THE DETAINEE HAD BEEN ASKED FOR ALL PERSONAL DATA AND TO PROVIDE INFORMAT

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ACTION EUR-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	OASY-00	EB-01	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-08	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00	OIC-02
	PA-01	PRS-01	P-01	SP-00	SR-00	SS-00	STR-01
	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PRME-01	DRL-09	G-00	/029W	

-----C695BE 171640Z /38

P 171736Z MAY 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5810  
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY  
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE//DO/LG/XP/IN//  
HQ JTF PP NAPLES IT//CA/POLAD//  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5-PMA/J21//  
JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
USNMR SHAPE BE//POLAD//  
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ISP//  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ3/ECJ4/ECJ5//  
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK//N2/N22//  
COM SIXTHFLT//N2//  
HQ JTF PP NAPLES IT//CA/POLAD//  
DIA WASHDC  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
USLO SKOPJE  
AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
NATO EU COLLECTIVE

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SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ISP//  
NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 ZAGREB 001908

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SUBJECT: VISIT TO DETAINED SERBS YIELDS NO SOLID EVIDENCE  
OF ABUSE

ION ON HIS  
MILITARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THE NAMES OF OTHER SOLDIERS  
AND THE COMMANDERS, AS WELL AS DETAILS OF ANY "WAR CRIMES"  
WITNESSED.

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NO SOLID EVIDENCE OF PHYSICAL MISTREATMENT  
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15. AFTER A BRIEF TOUR OF THE GYM, POLOFF WAS ALLOWED TO  
SPEAK IN PRIVATE (OUTDOORS) WITH DETAINEES THAT HE CHOSE  
AT RANDOM FROM THE GROUP. FIVE SEPARATE DETAINEES  
DESCRIBED LIVING CONDITIONS AS SATISFACTORY. THEY SAID  
THE FOOD WAS SUFFICIENT AND OF GOOD QUALITY. THEY HAD  
BEEN VISITED BY BOTH ICRC AND THE UN. ALL COMPLAINED OF  
BOREDOM (AFTER EIGHT DAYS SPENT ENTIRELY AT THE SPORTS  
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HALL). NONE OF THE DETAINEES REPORTED SEEING ANY OTHERS  
EVER TAKEN AWAY ALONE FROM THE GROUP, EXCEPT WHEN GOING UP  
TO THE INTERVIEW ROOMS. NONE RECALLED ANY DETAINEES NOT  
RETURNING FROM THEIR INTERROGATIONS, OR COMING BACK WITH  
OBVIOUS INJURIES OR BLEEDING.

16. ASKED IF THERE HAD BEEN BEATINGS OR MISTREATMENT, NONE  
OF THE PRISONERS CITED ANY SPECIFIC CASES. THEY ALL  
REPORTED THEY HAD SUFFERED NO ILL TREATMENT (ONE ADDED,  
"GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES"). BUT THEY COULD NOT, OR WOULD  
NOT, SAY THAT NO BEATINGS HAD TAKEN PLACE. ONE MAN SAID,  
"YOU WOULD HAVE TO TALK TO OTHERS TO FIND OUT," BUT WOULD  
NOT PROVIDE ANY FURTHER DETAILS. ASKED IF THEY WERE  
AFRAID, THEY ALL SAID THEIR REAL FEAR WAS CAUSED BY THE  
UNCERTAINTY OF WHERE THEY WERE GOING. (NOTE: OF THE 139  
STILL THERE THAT DAY, THE CROATIANS SAY THEY TRANSFERRED  
74 TO BJELOVAR AS POSSIBLE SUSPECTS.)  
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17. ASKED IF THEY PLANNED TO REMAIN IN CROATIA AFTER THEIR  
RELEASE, ALL OF THE DETAINEES SAID THAT THEY WOULD MAKE  
THAT DECISION BASED ON CONDITIONS BACK IN PAKRAC ONCE THEY  
REACHED THERE.

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COMMENT  
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18. LIVING CONDITIONS AT THE DETENTION CENTER WERE NOT  
UNBEARABLE, ALTHOUGH THEY MUST HAVE BEEN WORSE WHEN THE  
CENTER WAS MORE CROWDED. THE MORE IMPORTANT ISSUE,  
HOWEVER, IS WHETHER VIOLENCE WAS USED AGAINST THE  
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DETAINEES. DESPITE RUMORS PICKED UP BY INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS OF PRISONERS BEATEN IN VARAZDIN, POLOFF  
FOUND NO HARD EVIDENCE ON THE SCENE MAY 12 TO INDICATE  
THIS WAS THE CASE. IN WALKING THROUGH THE ROWS OF  
DETAINEES, POLOFF COULD NOT EASILY SEE ANY SIGNS OF WOUNDS  
OR BEATINGS. (NOTE: IN PAKRAC MAY 16, EMBOFFS FOUND 2  
SERBS RECENTLY RELEASED FROM BJELOVAR WHO SHOWED US  
BRUISES THEY CLAIMED TO HAVE RECEIVED IN VARAZDIN. SEE  
SEPTEL).

19. THE ATTITUDE AND COMMENTS OF THE LOCAL POLICE, HOWEVER,  
SUGGEST THAT THERE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN ROUGH TREATMENT OF  
THOSE DETAINEES WHO THE POLICE BELIEVED HAD PARTICIPATED  
IN ATROCITIES. THE POLICE DREW A CLEAR DISTINCTION  
BETWEEN THOSE DETAINEES WHO HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN CRIMES  
AGAINST CROATIA OR CIVILIANS, OR HAD MERELY FOLLOWED  
ORDERS DURING MILITARY SERVICE, AND THOSE DETAINEES WHO  
WERE BELIEVED TO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN OR ORDERED  
ATROCITIES. FOR THE FORMER GROUP, THE POLICE PROFESSED

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ACTION EUR-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	OASY-00	EB-01	H-01
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	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PRME-01	DRL-09	G-00	/029W	

-----C695C4 171640Z /38

P 171736Z MAY 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5811  
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY  
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE//DO/LG/XP/IN//  
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TOTAL SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT TUDJMAN'S STATEMENTS THAT  
THESE MEN SHOULD BE RELEASED.

110. BUT FOR THE LATTER GROUP (OR THOSE EVEN SUSPECTED OF  
BELONGING TO THE LATTER GROUP), THE ATTITUDE WAS MUCH MORE  
HARD-NOSED. THE POLICE WERE CATEGORICAL THAT ANYONE WHO  
WAS GUILTY OF "WAR CRIMES," AS DEFINED BY THE CROATIAN  
AUTHORITIES, SHOULD BE HELD, PROSECUTED, AND PUNISHED,  
REGARDLESS OF THE TERMS OF THE CEASEFIRE IN SECTOR WEST.  
THERE WAS NO RECEPTIVENESS TO THE SUGGESTION THAT, UNDER  
THE TERMS OF THE CEASEFIRE, THE POLICE SHOULD NOT HAVE  
BEEN INVESTIGATING THE DETAINEES OR HOLDING SUSPECTED WAR  
CRIMINALS. AND THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT THE POLICE  
WOULD BE INCLINED TO ACT WITH ANY TENDERNESS OR CARE

TOWARD SUCH SUSPECTS. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE MORE SERIOUS  
THE CRIME A DETAINEE WAS SUSPECTED OF, THE ROUGHER HIS  
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TREATMENT BY THE POLICE DURING INTERROGATION.

11. THE GUARDED COMMENTS OF THE DETAINEES ("OUR TREATMENT  
IS SATISFACTORY, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES"), AND THE  
APPEARANCE OF THOSE STILL IN THE SPORTS HALL, HOWEVER,  
SUGGESTED THAT WHATEVER ROUGH TREATMENT BY THE POLICE  
OCCURRED WAS NOT SYSTEMATIC AND WAS LIMITED (I.E., NO  
MURDERS, DISAPPEARANCES, OR INJURIES SERIOUS ENOUGH TO  
REQUIRE MEDICAL TREATMENT). FINAL CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING  
POLICE TREATMENT OF DETAINEES WILL REQUIRE FURTHER  
INVESTIGATION, ESPECIALLY OF THE DETAINEES SUSPECTED OF  
THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMES, WHO ARE NOW HELD IN THE MILITARY  
PRISON IN BJELOVAR. EMBASSY ALSO INTENDS TO PUSH THE  
CROATIAN GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW FULLER ACCESS TO ICRC, WHICH  
HAS COMPLAINED TO US OF LIMITS IMPOSED ON IT BY THE GOC.

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